



## Quality of Teaching in Higher Education: A Systematic Literature Review

Kertmee Sackdanouvong

Research and Academic Service Office, National University of Laos

Email: sackdanouvongk@gmail.com

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article History:

Submitted: Jan 23, 2024

Revise: May 19, 2024

Accepted: June 27, 2024

Available online: 30 Dec 2024

#### Keywords:

Quality of Teaching, Higher Education and Systematic Literature Review

### ABSTRACT

Given the increasing requirements to the quality of education and the dynamic changes in the conditions of functioning and increased competition in the market of educational services, higher education institutions are not only required to have a highly qualified lecturers with high quality of teaching and application of innovative teaching methods, sophisticated equipment and infrastructure, but must also offer competitive individual programs to attract more students.

High-quality teaching is essential to the higher education institutions, and has become heightened within this increasing competition across the globe. This paper examined aspects and approaches of quality of teaching and enhancement in higher education context by reviewing relevant literature. A systematic literature review method was employed with a meta-ethnography approach to locate, appraise and synthesize findings from thirty-one reviewed articles. The review found eight key themes associated with quality of teaching in higher education, involving (1) teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills; (2) meeting students' needs and expectations; (3) feedback, assessment and observations; (4) peer review of teaching; (5) student evaluation of teaching; (6) teachers with enthusiastic and approach manner; (7) teaching exchange workshop and using quality teaching model; and (8) institutional support and facilitating teachers' collaboration. This systematic review has important implications for higher institutions in decision-making in regarding developing and implementing quality of teaching, evaluation and enhancement initiatives. It could also provide a basis for more rational and evidence-based approaches that could lead to quality enhancement across higher education sector.

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**Cite this article:** Kertmee Sackdanouvong. (2024). *Quality of Teaching in Higher Education: A Systematic Literature Review*. *Lao Social Science Journal (LSSJ)*, 1, 2, 37-51, ISSN: 2664-6331

### Introduction

Quality of teaching is central to higher education institutions and has become an important issue as the landscape of higher education has been encountered continuous changes (Cardoso et al., 2015; Hernard & Leprince-Ringuest, 2009). Meanwhile, the centrality and the criticality for higher education sector is likely that the quality of research rather than teaching has been

a prominent focus of university quality assurance activities and ranking metrics within regions and worldwide (Harrison et al., 2020). Over the last two decades, however, there has been a rising concern globally in relation to quality of teaching in higher education (Townsend & bates, 2007) since a number of factors across national and international higher

education institutions have brought about a dedication of resources in order to measure and improve the quality of teaching (Laurie & Nicholls, 2005; Üstünlüoğlu, 2017). These factors involve the emphasizes on “accountability, increasing global competitiveness, the internationalization of higher education sector, and an increasing mobilization of students” (Harrison et al., 2020, p. 1).

This increasing accountability in the public sector has encouraged governments and universities in many countries in establishing quality assurance audits of higher education activities, including quality of teaching (Greatbatch & Holland, 2016). This is because of the recognition of the demand of their higher education system effectiveness in offering value to the nations and providing educational opportunities and producing a skilled workforce for the knowledge economy (Harrison et al., 2020). Similarly, quality of teaching has been considered as one of the critical quality assurance indicators for auditing higher education institutions’ performance, and being used as one of the drivers for informing universities’ ranking throughout higher education systems (Harrison et al., 2020; Musselin, 2018). Due to a rapid growth and expansion of higher education globally, involving the diversity of students both socially and geographically; calling for new teaching methods; modern technologies in classroom that require interactions between students and professors; expectations from the governments, students and their families; and fund providers (Hernard & Leprince-Ringuet, 2009; Noben et al., 2020), it is inevitable for higher education institutions to ensure the quality of teaching and learning to meet those stakeholders’ needs and expectations as well as producing quality graduates (Cardoso et al., 2015; Greatbatch & Holland, 2016).

Universities are considered to be continuously required to examine the quality of teaching and the research they conduct in order to seek for methods in sustaining their continuous enhancement of quality although these two competing international rankings, research and teaching, rely heavily on research as a yardstick of the universities’ value while leaving aside the quality of teaching (Harrison et al., 2020; Hernard & Leprince-Ringuet, 2009). However, because of the rapid expansion of higher education sector, there have been needs to re-examine and explore the importance of quality of teaching in universities (Hénard, 2010a; Hénard & Roseveare, 2012), either in forms of student ratings, student interviews, administrative ratings, learning outcome measures, teaching portfolios, or curricula reviewing (Berk, 2005). Despite considerable literature has been published on research quality and other universities’ ranking indicators, relatively few

studies have focussed on quality of teaching in higher education settings (Harrison et al., 2020; Hattie, 2015; Schneider & Prechel, 2017). As to contribute to the sparse body of work and to fill this gap, this study aims to examine quality of teaching in higher education context, and the research questions that are used to guide this study are:

(1) What are the key aspects of quality of teaching in higher education?

(2) What approaches that are used to enhance the quality of teaching in higher education?

## **Literature review**

### **Defining quality in higher education**

According to Harvey and Green (1993), quality is regarded as a multifaceted notion which is in nature value-laden, and it was illustrated that different stakeholders in higher education view quality and its outcomes differently resulting in a host of methods and approaches that were adopted to measure the quality. What quality entails in higher education might be unclear as it is a multidimensional term, simultaneously dynamic and contextual, while it may also be perceived differently by different stakeholders (Dicker et al., 2019). Within higher education there are four key stakeholders, providers (e.g. funding bodies), users of products (e.g. students), users of outputs (e.g. employers) and employees of higher education (Schindler et al. 2015); quality is likely to be perceived differently from each viewpoint and is therefore relative (Dicker et al., 2019; Schindler et al., 2015). Quality as viewed by Sanyal and Martin (2007) is more likely to embrace much of the diversity of views and purposes, involving “providing excellence, being exceptional, providing value for money, conforming to specifications, getting things right the first time, meeting customers’ needs, having zero defects, providing added value, and exhibiting fitness of purpose” (cited in Bigalke & Neubauer, 2009, pp.11-12). It is important to note that, as asserted by (Tam, 2001), understanding quality is necessary to recognize its contradictory meanings which could result in different assessment methods, and therefore different practical outcomes. The definitions of quality in higher education have evolved over a period of time based on changes in the national quality assurance framework applied in different contexts and changes in higher education landscape (Prisacariu & Shah, 2016). However, it is perhaps the most cited and well-known definition of quality in education derives from the work of Harvey and Green (1993) who categorize quality into five categories, that is “quality as exceptional, as perfection, (or consistency), as fitness for purpose, as value for money, and as transformative” (p.11). These notions of quality are viewed as relevant to the current

context of higher education even though they have been conceptualized more than 20 years (Prisacariu & Shah, 2016).

### **Quality of teaching in higher education**

Universities globally, like any organisation that emphasises quality of production or services, are responsible for providing quality education to students. In higher education, society expects reassurances regarding the quality of education; that is, the quality of higher education should be planned to execute its operation and management systematically, to ensure that educational goals can be achieved (Brennan et al., 1997; Chen et al., 2014). Due to the fact that higher education emphasizes on the exploration of knowledge in several domains, teachers in these organisations often receive respect and are free to carve their own niche in developing and managing their teaching courses (Chen et al., 2014). Thus, freedom of teaching and individualism occurs in an environment of higher education where lecturers are seen to be highly self-governed and independent (Chen et al., 2014; George, 1997). Despite of this, current quality management standards for higher education from various organization responsible for quality matter focus mostly on organisation (Chen et al., 2014). It was pointed out that teachers in this domain appear to think that quality management is irrelevant to course teaching and is about the institution's administrative affairs. As in turn, this leads to low teacher participation in quality management (Chen et al., 2014).

Several researchers indicate that quality of teaching can be measured objectively by employing methods such as student ratings, student interviews, administrative ratings, learning outcome measures, teaching portfolios, and review of curricula (Berk, 2005; Chen & Hoshower, 2003; Üstünlüoğlu, 2017). Berk (2005) argues that students' evaluation of teaching or teacher (SET) is more likely to provide more accurate results because they are direct tools, and the quality of instruction delivery can ultimately only be effectively student feedback although each strategy possesses its own potentials. In supporting this view, some researchers illustrate that student evaluations not only have a positive influence on the improvement of instructional skills but also raise students' awareness of the teaching process (March & Roche, 1997; Penny, 2003). They further add that students can provide valid, reliable and valuable data concerning quality of teaching. It is, however, emphasized that size of the class, gender, the nature of the course itself, and the administration of data collection are seen as main factors that could affect the objectivity of SET, and hence it should be carefully considered (March & Roche, 1997; Üstünlüoğlu, 2017). In this manner, SET

can be selected as an opportunity for universities in searching for means to enhance quality in teaching, and also for the lecturers themselves, who are expected not only to have the required subject knowledge, but also understand students' perceptions of effective teaching (Üstünlüoğlu, 2017).

Likewise, a number of strategies have been employed and embedded in higher education sector in order to assess and enhance the quality of teaching, including the use of survey instruments to gather formal feedback from students to provide assessment and feedback on teaching practice, and the introduction of summative and formative peer review of teaching processes (Bell & Cooper, 2013; Harrison et al., 2020). In relation to these strategies, research by Smith (2008) also conducted research on the use of student feedback surveys and their impact on enhancing the quality of teaching and the role of formative peer review. Ramsden (2002) pointed out six principles of effective teaching in higher education, such as ensuring student interest, providing skilled explanations and intellectual challenge, demonstrating concern and respect for students, providing appropriate assessment and feedback, and giving clear goals. Meanwhile, the study by Aregbeyen (2010) listed the most effective elements of teaching, including clear explanations, showing interest and concern in quality of teaching, capacity to assess the students' level of understanding, having an engaging presentation style, maintaining an interest in recent developments in the field, respect for students, the ability to identify the key issues in lectures, accuracy and precision in answering questions, and laying emphasis on conceptual understanding.

Despite a growing work of studies on the effectiveness of teaching and quality in higher education, it is indicated that more work is needed in relation to meeting expectations in teaching quality, specifically in investigating lecturers' application of pedagogical knowledge when transferring discipline-specific knowledge (Hernard & Roseveare, 2012; Üstünlüoğlu, 2017). Similarly, projects and reports recommend that universities should put more effort into developing quality of teaching, in particular, pedagogy enhancement, support for student learning, and continuing education for faculty members (Hénard, 2010b; Hernard & Roseveare, 2012; Üstünlüoğlu, 2017). Moreover, Harrison et al. (2020) pointed out that a scoping review of current evidence by the authors revealed a voluminous literature regarding individual approaches for enhancing teaching quality, including multiple reviews with a range of foci, teaching and learning outcomes of interest, populations, and quality enhancement methods. Despite of this, there is no review to date has synthesised the evidence for all

methods of quality of teaching evaluation and enhancement across higher education contexts as to illustrate what is known about current approaches and the evidence available of their effectiveness (Harrison et al., 2020). This knowledge is valuable for organisations, especially higher education institutions in establishing evaluation or enhancement processes of quality of teaching (Harrison et al., 2020). By conducting a systematic review of literature related to quality of teaching in higher education, this study thus would provide synthesis of evidence regarding key aspects of the quality teaching and approaches to enhance the quality which are pivotal in higher education context.

### **Method and procedures**

In this study, a systematic literature review method was employed with a meta-ethnography approach applied (Noblit & Hare, 1988; Pettricrew & Roberts, 2005) in order to locate, appraise and synthesize qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods studies that investigated quality of teaching in higher education. The meta-ethnography approach is seen an interpretive strategy in order to synthesize data, and is originally developed by Noblit and Hare (1988) in the field of education. Through the process of meta-ethnography, researchers compare and analyse studies while at the same time establishing new interpretations across several studies (Atkins et al., 2008). Thus, in this study, the main phases of the review were conducted in accordant with this framework adapted based on (Atkins et al., 2008; Noblit & Hare, 1988) as indicated in table 1.

In the first phase, decision in the targeted area of research studies related to quality of teaching in higher education (HE) was made; while, in the second phase, searching strategies were developed to locate related studies. This study was limited to the search of articles written in English language which were published from 2005 up to 2023 with specific criteria for inclusion and exclusion in order to identify the most relevant and appropriate studies. As emphasized by Hammersley (2020), one of the key feature of systematic review is that explicit criteria must be adopted, both in determining which studies found in a search sufficiently relevant to be included, and in assessing the likely validity of research findings. Therefore, precise criteria were determined in this study as to seek the most related articles (see table 2). The criteria for inclusion involved studies that used qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods in relation to quality of teaching in higher

education sector, especially lecturer's quality of teaching; assessing quality of teaching in higher education; enhancing of quality of teaching in higher education; and quality of teaching in various subjects within higher education context. Meanwhile, the exclusive criteria include quality of teaching in primary, secondary and vocational education levels; and general quality management and quality assurance higher education.

In order to locate appropriate literatures, different databases (i.e. Springer Link, Sage Journals, Web of Science, and Taylor & Francis Online) are searched by using key terms associated with \*quality\*, \*teaching\*, \*higher education\* in the Web of Science; while, the words or phrases such as 'quality of teaching' AND 'higher education'; 'lecturers' quality of teaching' AND 'higher education'; and 'teaching quality' AND 'higher education' were used to search in Springer Link, Sage Journals, and in Taylor & Francis Online databases. These databases were selected because of the fact that in most field, including education, relevant research is published in a range of journals which may be indexed in different bibliographic databases and thus it may be important to search multiple bibliographic databases (Newman & Gough, 2020).

Initially, this search brought about 42 articles relevant to this study in terms of topic relation and in the criteria frame work; meanwhile, 31 of them were selected based on careful screening against the criteria.

In the phase of meta-ethnography which involved 'reading the studies', it was important to be come as familiar as possible with the content and the detail of evidence concerned with quality of teaching in higher education. In phase 5, in 'identifying how the studies are related', a list of themes that emerged from studies were established (Noblit & Hare, 1988). Likewise, in phase 6, 'translation' was implemented by arranging each paper chronologically by comparing the themes from paper one with paper two; whereas, the synthesis of the emerging themes in the two papers were then compared with paper three, and this process was repeated till all included 32 articles were compared (Atkins et al., 2008; Noblit & Hare, 1988). As in the process of comparing the selected articles, in this review, the initial broad grouping of themes was refined by merging and collapsing themes. This procedure, as noted by Tondeur et al. (2012, p. 136) 'required repeatedly returning to the original data to verify, contradict, or enrich interpretations'.

Table 1. The process of completing the meta-ethnography (Atkins et al., 2008; Noblit &amp; Hare, 1988).

Phase	Steps for this study
(1) Aim	The area of interest is the quality of teaching in higher education
(2) Search strategy	The text words involve the following: e.g. *quality*, *teaching*, *higher education*; 'quality of teaching' AND 'higher education'; 'lecturers' quality of teaching' AND 'higher education'; and 'teaching quality' AND 'higher education'
(3) Quality assessment	Relevant studies were appraised by using criteria of inclusion and exclusion, and criteria with adapted version of Atkins et al. (2008).
(4) Reading the studies	Studies were read carefully and thoroughly, and content issues raised and expressed by original authors were collected.
(5) Determining how the studies are related	Studies with the same thematic were determined and grouped.
(6) Translation	Similarities, differences, and unusual information were combined across the studies.
(7) Synthesizing the translation	Analysing and synthesizing of thematic commonalities were conducted.
(8) Expressing the synthesis	The results of the analysis from this study were reported and written based on themes emerged from the reviews.

Table 2. Quality criteria (adapted from Atkins et al., 2008; Tondeur et al., 2012)

	Question	Yes	No	Unclear
1	Is this study qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods research?	31	0	0
2	Is this study conducted in the context of higher education?	31	0	0
3	Are the research purposes and questions related and clearly stated?	31	0	0
4	Is the qualitative, quantitative or mixed method clearly justified?	31	0	0
5	Is the approach appropriate for research questions?	31	0	0
6	Is the sampling method clearly described?	31	0	0
7	Is the method of data collection clearly described?	31	0	0
8	Is the method of analysis clearly described?	31	0	0
9	Is the analysis appropriate for the research question?	31	0	0

## Findings

### Sample characteristics

Thirty-one articles from different journals that were located in the multiple databases were included in the review and data was in cooperated from quality of teaching in higher education, lecturer's quality of teaching, faculty's quality of teaching. The studies involved in the meta-ethnography were conducted in the context of higher education in different

countries: fourteen articles were from the United Kingdom, four articles were from Australia, two articles were from China, three articles from USA, one article from Portugal, two articles from the Netherlands, one article from Scotland, one article from Zimbabwe, one article from Germany, one article from Turkey and Slovakia, and one article from Poland (see table.3).

Table3. Articles included in the review

Paper	Authors & Year	Research design	Country/region
1	Annan et al. (2013)	Quan	UK
2	Cardoso et al. (2015)	Qual	Portugal
3	Chen et al. (2014)	Qual	China
4	Darling-Hammond (2021)	Qual	Australia
5	Darling-Hammond et al. (2012)	Qual	USA
6	Dicker et al. (2019)	Mixed	UK
7	Douglas and Douglas (2006).	Qual	UK
8	Feigenbaum and Iqani (2015).	Qual	UK
9	Gourlay and Stevenson (2017)	Qual	UK
10	Greatbatch and Holland (2016b)	Qual	UK
11	Harrison et al. (2022)	Qual	UK
12	Henard and Leprince-Ringuet (2008b).	Qual	UK
13	Jasman et al. (2013a)	Qual	UK
14	Johnston et al. (2022)	Qual	Australia

15	Keeley et al. (2016)	Quan	USA
16	Klette (2023)	Qual	The Netherlands
17	Lai (2021)	Qual	China
18	Lomas and Nicholls (2005)	Qual	UK
19	Lubicz-Nawrocka and Bunting (2019)	Qual	Scotland
20	Mukwambo (2020)	Qual	Zimbabwe
21	Noben et al. (2022)	Quan	The Netherlands
22	Patfield et al. (2022)	Qual	Australia
23	Runge et al. (2023)	Quan	Germany
24	Ryan et al. (2021)	Qual	Australia
25	Su (2022)	Qual	UK
26	Sutherland et al. (2018)	Quan	UK
27	Ulker (2021)	Qual	Turkey
28	Üstünlüoğlu (2017b)	Mixed	Turkey and Slovakia
29	Voss et al. (2022)	Qual	UK
30	Wiśniewska and Grudowski (2016)	Qual	Poland
31	Wood and Su (2017)	Qual	UK

### Synthesizing of findings

Based on the synthesis, the results revealed eight key themes related to quality of teaching in higher education. The synthesis findings are reported in

relation to key aspects of quality of teaching and aspects to enhancing quality of teaching in higher education. Table 4 presents key themes in relation to each study.

Table 4. Thematic overview of the studies

Category	Themes	Papers
1	Teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills	12,9,5,29,28,31,30,3,4
2	Meeting students' needs and expectations	12,13,28,4,30,23,9
3	Feedback, assessment and observation	14,19,25,7,16,24,26
4	Peer review of teaching	10,11,18,20,14,22
5	Student evaluation of teaching	11,20,27,1
6	Teacher with enthusiastic and approachable manner	6,30,15,10
7	Teaching exchange workshop, and using quality teaching model	8, 22
8	Institutional support and facilitating teachers' collaboration	2, 17

### Key themes related to aspects of quality of teaching in higher education

#### Teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills

Teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills were most commonly found reported to be associated with quality of teaching in higher education, which is featuring in nine of the 32 review articles (Chung-Yang et al., 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2021; Darling-Hammond et al., 2012; Gourlay & Stevenson, 2017; Henard & Leprince-Ringuet, 2008; Üstünlüoğlu, 2017; Voss et al., 2022; Wiśniewska & Grudowski, 2016; Wood & Su, 2017). In regard to this theme emerged, a paper by Üstünlüoğlu (2017) pointed out that lecturers at the Faculty of

Education where the paper has been conducted were already expected to have a sufficient degree of pedagogical knowledge, identified as the capability to establish a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere in the class, present interesting and motivating work, helping students with difficulties, as well as encouraging and motivating their students as for them to develop personal talents, self-confidence, self-expectation and rapport. Gourlay & Stevenson (2017) highlights the emergent nature of the pedagogical relationship as one of the related aspects to quality of teaching in higher education. From their findings, Wood and Su (2017) found that excellent lecturers are more likely to be those

who are dedicated and committed, capable of producing motivational learning relationships, possess their expertise in subject discipline and are skilled in pedagogical approaches that promote students' independence and critical thinking. The researchers further explained that excellent lecturers influence students in ways that they could develop their inspiration to learn and experience new concepts, share their thought, risk mistakes and experiment (Wood & Su, 2017). A review by Darling-Hammond et al. (2012) emphasises that teaching quality is seen related to strong instruction which enables students to learn, and it is in part a function of teacher quality, teachers' knowledge, skills and dispositions. It is further noted that if teaching is to be effective, capacity of individual teachers, teaching and learning environment must be addressed by policy makers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2012).

A paper conducted by Henard & Leprince-Ringuet (2008) also emphasizes that quality teaching is indeed student-centred that it aims most at for all student learning, hence attention should not be only given to the learning environment that address the students' need, but also to the lecturers' pedagogical skills. Runge et al. (2023) from their research revealed that teachers with certain digital knowledge and skills are able to use digital technologies to differentiate student tasks and material actively; to conduct classroom management and cognitive activation, and supportive climate. It is further emphasized that overall teachers' digital competence-related beliefs in relation to empowering students were reported used of digital technologies to enhance teaching quality. The researchers suggest that this insightful knowledge is relevant for lecturer's education because it offers teaching digital pedagogical competencies in an integrative manner (Runge et al., 2023). In this theme of teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills, other two review articles mentioned that the presence of teachers' teaching capabilities or skills and teachers' maturity assist them to identify the process-centric quality road map where they are, and the needs that they require to enhance and attain their teaching excellence (Chung-Yang et al., 2014). Meanwhile, Darling-Hammond (2021) asserted that lecturers' teaching is increasingly seen as rooted in a wide-ranging knowledge base, including an understanding of content, pedagogy, and students to focus on responding to their diverse social, emotional and academic needs. The lecturers' role is often seen as valuable to student learning since they could offer an authentic and relevant approach to engage with available knowledge and manage it effectively (Darling-Hammond, 2021).

### **Meeting students' needs and expectations**

In relation to this theme, meeting or responding to students' needs and expectation, seven articles in the review discussed this theme of meeting the needs of students as one of the means to improve the quality of teaching in higher education (Darling-Hammond, 2021; Gourlay & Stevenson, 2017; Henard & Leprince-Ringuet, 2008; Jasman et al., 2013; Runge et al., 2023; Üstünlüoğlu, 2017; Wiśniewska & Grudowski, 2016). It was found in from these reviewed articles that one of the aspects of quality of teaching in higher education were associated with being able to identify the best way of supporting learning in relation to the student's needs and context (Henard & Leprince-Ringuet, 2008a; Jasman et al., 2013). According to the case study conducted in two countries, Üstünlüoğlu (2017) indicated and raised important points for consideration, that is, teaching quality in higher education, especially the need for thoroughly consideration of student evaluations, an identification of the exact expectations of students from lecturers, and an increased awareness of lecturers regarding these expectations, and ongoing professional development. As it is pointed out, the university lecturers seemed to fail to meet their students' expectations in terms of teaching quality (Üstünlüoğlu, 2017).

Darling-Hammond (2021) and Jasman et al. (2013) found that the concept of teaching in higher education may require to take into consideration of matching the needs of students regardless of whatever scenario may develop in higher education. This was also indicated by the authors that quality teaching would exist when lecturers are able to identify best approach to support and provide feedback to what students needs that are relevant to their learning context and workplace (Darling-Hammond, 2021; Jasman et al., 2013). Wiśniewska and Grudowski (2016) reported from their research that high quality academic teachers are to understand students' needs, and prepare the most desired teaching environment. They pointed out some soft characteristics of lecturers, involving empathy, the critical qualities which are concerned with forgiving and tolerant, and are open to individual students' needs (Wiśniewska & Grudowski, 2016). Further, it is informed that understanding the structure of teachers' competency-related beliefs on empowering students and their relations to teaching quality in technology-improved teaching is pertinent to their education as to address students' various learning needs, and promoting active and creative engagement (Gourlay & Stevenson, 2017; Henard & Leprince-Ringuet, 2008a; Runge et al., 2023a).

### **Peer review of teaching**

Based on the synthesis, this review found six articles discussed the use of peer review of teaching as one of the key aspects of quality of teaching in higher education (Greatbatch & Holland, 2016; Harrison et al., 2022; Johnston et al., 2022; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Mukwambo, 2020; Patfield et al., 2022). Peer review can take in two forms as formative or summative process. Formative peer review of teaching was commonly conceptualised as a structured framework for the ongoing improvement of quality of teaching through peer collaboration, discussion and mutual learning (Harrison et al., 2020). In contrast, summative peer review was often implemented in the context of academic promotion as a process through which teaching quality could be evaluated against organisational standards (Harrison et al., 2020; Johnston et al., 2020). Lomas and Nicholls (2005) illustrated that “peer review of teaching can be a quality-enhancing tool that is an integral part of individual lecturers’ continuing professional development and the professionalization of the teaching process” (p.146). Peer review of teaching can generate an opportunity for constructive criticism in an informal and supportive environment (Lomas & Nicholls, 2005); it is a time when lecturers can reflect on ways of improving their teaching, and offer additional benefits as it can increase academics’ confidence in using quality of teaching approaches to their practices (Patfield et al., 2022).

A paper conducted by Mukwambo (2020) discussed one of the key points that participants raised in relation to assuring quality of teaching by overseeing peer reviews of teaching which could potentially improve the quality of teaching and learning. Similarly, one key point from the paper of Greatbatch and Holland (2016) also highlighted that peer review is considered as a good tool for enhancing teaching quality; meanwhile, it is also seen as challenging to see how this may be converted to a metric for ensuring excellence widely. According to a thematic synthesis by Johnston et al. (2022), it was revealed that peer review of teaching extends some factors in three levels, including organizational level, program and individual levels. Whereas the factors at the organizational level involve disciplinary context, program sustainability, collegiality and leadership, the factors at program level covers framework, program design, basis of participation, observation, feedback and reflective practice. Ultimately, the factors at the individual level comprises of prior experience and participants perceived development requirements (Johnston et al., 2022).

### **Student evaluation of teaching**

Student evaluation of teaching, or of teachers is reported as one of the dimensions associated with quality of teaching in higher education. According to the theme emerged, six reviewed articles talked about this issue of evaluation (Annan et al., 2013; Hammonds et al., 2017; Harrison et al., 2022; Mukwambo, 2020; Ulker, 2021; Üstünlüoğlu, 2017a). Ulkert (2021) demonstrated that the use of student evaluation of teaching has become widely evident as part of assuring quality process in line with the current era demands in relation to internalisation of the higher education sector. It is further heightened that student evaluations can bring about improvement of teaching quality based on the design of the evaluation scheme, operation of evaluation of teaching quality and post evaluation procedures (Ulker, 2021). A review by Annan et al. (2013) asserted from their article by emphasizing the important role of student evaluations in the promotion and tenure of faculty though many unique challenges in nursing education may have, while Mukwambo (2020) pointed out the discussion with four deans as research participants that overseeing student evaluations of lecturers is one way to assure quality of teaching. In a similar vein, a paper from Üstünlüoğlu (2017) highlighted the important points for consideration such as quality of teaching in higher education, especially the need for the serious consideration of student evaluations, and identification of the real expectations of students from teachers. Hammonds et al. (2017) discussed from their article that student evaluations of teaching have been on research agenda over three decades; they have been proven to be popular and relative efficient means of obtaining feedback on teaching in higher education sector globally. The authors pointed out to the strong likelihood that this form of evaluation would continue to be applied in higher education context, and suggested on ways forward to improve the quality of student responses and help educators in using the data for highest benefit (Hammonds et al., 2017a). Harrison et al. (2022) from their synthesis highlighted the self-reported data from students in regard to multiple aspects of teaching quality and perceived effectiveness were found most commonly reported. The authors pointed to student evaluation survey as quantitative outcome, low-cost and can contribute as part of broader quality approach to improve the quality of teaching in higher education.

### **Feedback, assessment and observation**

From the synthesis, this paper found feedback, assessment and observation as other key tools to assess and enhance teaching quality in higher education which are existed in six articles (Douglas & Douglas, 2006; Johnston et al., 2022; Klette, 2023; Lomas & Nicholls,



2005; Lubicz-Nawrocka & Bunting, 2019a; Su, 2022). Based on the review, Johnston et al. (2022) found that feedback and observation were frequently reported by twelve authors that they reviewed. The positive role of observation of peers and formative collegiate feedback was also described in ways that educational developer or expert reviewer in providing effective feedback was seen important whereas inclusion of group feedback processes facilitated participants an opportunity to gain benefits from others' knowledge and experience (Johnston et al., 2022). Lubicz-Nawrocka and Bunting (2019) pointed out from their work that offering face-to-face feedback sessions further assist to make teachers more approachable to students. Within this theme of feedback, some authors pointed out to student survey questionnaires as one of its forms in order to be used to assess teaching quality by exploring students' perceptions of lecturers or classroom behavior (Henard & Leprince-Ringuet, 2008; Herbert et al., 2022; Senden et al., 2023). The use of student questionnaire survey is commonly widespread because of its easy and low-cost implementation (Senden et al., 2023), as well as its valid measure for teaching quality on the classroom level which can be used across various education systems and in internal educational research (Herbert et al., 2022). As such, utilizing student questionnaires seems to be logical since students are those who are the most exposed to the most affected by the lecturer's teaching (Henard & Leprince-Ringuet, 2008). Likewise, an article by Sutherland et al. (2018) reported on how teaching assessment and feedback quality affected students' satisfaction on teacher' quality of teaching and found that teaching quality, fair assessment and feedback by lecturers are of great important for their students.

In Su (2022)'s paper, it was indicated that teacher's feedback has been used effectively in supporting students' development, progression and attainment. Su (2022) further reported that many universities have attempted to work out on the challenges related to student satisfaction by suggesting various approaches of summative and formative assessment, the use of standardized methods to make sure that feedback is consistent, and the use of technologies in assignment feedback process. Ryan et al. (2021) reported that feedback information must aim at creating personalized comments in order to directly address individual students' performance on a relevant task and provide clear advices on how the students can improve their subsequent tasks. In Klette (2023)'s article, the researcher illustrated that some key domains as important for teaching quality, which was operationalized at the level of coding manuals, have contributed to means of systematically exploring how

teaching practices, such as use of feedback and representation of content and discourses may be varied dependent on the context, subjects and curricula. Meanwhile, Douglas and Douglas (2006) suggested that among the methods should be feedback questionnaires, peer observation and mystery student reports. For this to happen, it requires an establishment of a culture of criticism and staff must be aware of the data collected is for the purpose of improving the quality of teaching and learning, but not for teachers' assessment (Douglas & Douglas, 2006). According to Lomas and Nicholls (2005), observation can be seen as an internal process of peer review in which a university lecturer participates his or her colleague's teaching session with an intention of offering feedback. This process of observation, including pre-observation, observation and post-observation meetings was highly valuable by lecturers and it assisted them by offering them with constructive criticism within a supportive environment. as noted, this process of observation further gave them an opportunity to reflect and scrutinize the means in order to improve their quality of teaching (Lomas & Nicholls, 2005).

#### **Teaching exchange workshop and quality teaching model usage**

According to the synthesis, this review found further aspects related to quality of teaching enhancement. Feigenbaum and Iqani (2015) investigated issues pertinent to an enhancement of teaching quality and teaching quality assurance in the UK higher education context by designing 'teaching exchange workshop' with forty research participants. From their research, it was reported that teaching exchange workshop provides a model for quality control that enable educators to deal with challenges that have been existed (Feigenbaum & Iqani, 2015). It also offered a space for locating share concerns and developing collective solutions by facilitating critical dialogue and reflection among teachers in the department. From this article, it was also pointed out to the structural constraints on teaching quality which are related to changing teaching load; the marketization of degree programmes and the internationalization of student bodies (Feigenbaum & Iqani, 2015). Patfield et al. (2022) conducted a qualitative research with academics at one Australian university to investigate perceived impacts of an academic development program by applying the quality teaching model to enhance conceptual understandings of quality teaching. From their article, it was found out direct benefits from this utilisation of the model in terms of analysing practice, course planning, collegial collaboration, and improving the student experience. It was further argued that applying quality teaching model had a considerable

potential for assisting a comprehension from managing quality to realising quality of teaching in higher education. It supports academic lecturers not only to develop deeper understanding of quality pedagogy, while more importantly, to translate this kind of knowledge into strategies to improve their teaching (Patfield et al., 2022).

### **Institutional support and facilitating teachers' collaboration**

Four articles in the review mentioned and discussed institutional support as one of the approaches to enhance quality of teaching in higher education (Cardoso et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2014; Dicker et al., 2019; Henard & Leprince-Ringuet, 2008). Cardoso et al. (2015) pointed out to what they had found was that quality of teaching in higher education in Portugal which was complying with European standards and guidelines for quality assurance was seen only partial. The key instruments and measurements associated with continuously improvement of teaching quality were institutional support for skills development, pedagogical training, material infrastructure and motivation strategies (Cardoso et al., 2015; Dicker et al., 2019). As such, Chen et al. (2014) mentioned mutual support between educational organisation and teachers as for a mechanism to enhance the quality of teaching. It was noted that teachers are seen as the key actors in delivering quality of teaching, with institutions playing a supporting role by providing resources and incentives to assist teacher successful successfully deliver quality teaching (Chen et al., 2014). Whereas, higher education institutions may have educational policies with which teachers have to comply. Thus, in this regard, bi-directional linkages of mutual needs must be established needs in order to maintain the integrity and consistency between the individual teachers and the organisation's educational policies (Chen et al., 2014). Similarly, it was asserted by Henard and (Henard & Leprince-Ringuet (2008)'s article that one of the main driving forces for enhancing the quality of teaching relates to lecturers' leadership whereas the role of the department, of the educational support divisions and of the central university are central.

Another study in the review also discussed the theme of facilitating teachers' collaboration, as a means to improve teaching quality in higher education (Lai, 2021). It was pointed that teacher collaboration facilitating within teacher communities was perceived to be an effective means of enhancing quality. In Lai (2021)'s qualitative research which was conducted in a university in China, there were important findings emerged from the study, such as joint enterprise arrangement and the use of a standardized repertoire.

Within these, teachers were assigned by the university to take part in different kinds of teacher collaboration, including lesson observations, open lessons, and lesson competitions (Lai, 2021).

### **Discussion**

This study synthesises evidence of aspects and enhancement approaches to quality of teaching used across higher education context globally. Even though there is a widespread implementation across the sector, limitation of empirical research data related to the effectiveness of such approaches in quality of teaching enhancing is inevitable. It is therefore the findings that are reported in this paper can contribute to the literature associated with quality of teaching at theoretical level, as well as at a practical level in the higher education sector. This review paper identified eight key categories of strategies that are widely used to assure and enhance the quality of teaching in higher education, including teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills; meeting students' needs and expectations; feedback, assessment and observations; peer review of teaching; student evaluation of teaching; teachers with enthusiastic and approach manner; teaching exchange workshop and using quality teaching model; and institutional support and facilitating teachers' collaboration. The findings from this review suggest that each of these aspects or strategies possesses a useful data, meanwhile these fruitful data require careful interpretation, and considerable resources in order to put into practice these strategies (Harrison et al., 2022). It might need a multi approach to support and improve the quality of teaching since different higher education context may require a varied deploying of strategies, and it may take place over a longer duration of teaching practice as asserted by (Harrison et al., 2022).

Based on the findings of this review, four prominent themes out of eight themes, involving teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills; meeting students' needs and expectations; feedback, assessment and observations; and peer review of teaching were commonly featured in various reviewed articles (Darling-Hammond, 2021; Douglas & Douglas, 2006; Gourlay & Stevenson, 2017; Greatbatch & Holland, 2016; Harrison et al., 2022; Henard & Leprince-Ringuet, 2008; Jasman et al., 2013; Johnston et al., 2022; Klette, 2023; Lomas & Nicholls, 2005; Lubicz-Nawrocka & Bunting, 2019; Mukwambo, 2020; Patfield et al., 2022; Runge et al., 2023; Ryan et al., 2021; Su, 2022; Sutherland et al., 2018; Üstünlüoğlu, 2017; Wiśniewska & Grudowski, 2016). The results of this review are consistent with several articles that reviewed or investigated approaches and aspects pertinent to the quality of teaching, as well as of teachers in higher education context (Burić & Frenzel,

2023; Cardoso et al., 2015; Dicker et al., 2019; Greatbatch & Holland, 2016; Hammonds et al., 2017; Patfield et al., 2022b; Runge et al., 2023; Üstünlüoğlu, 2017; Wood & Su, 2017).

This review found that teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills is seen as a more evidence. Review articles or research on this issue have also yielded interested results in which they demonstrated a range of understandings, meanings and emphases in pedagogical knowledge and capabilities of lecturers. On the one hand, it seemed that good quality of teaching is primarily associated with pedagogical competence and skills, embracing research-informed pedagogical practice, while on the other hand, it emphasizes the subject knowledge (Wood & Su, 2017). Meanwhile, it is stressed by Üstünlüoğlu (2017) that despite a growing body of research on the effectiveness of teaching and quality in higher education, more work is still needed for investigating lecturers' applying pedagogical knowledge when transferring discipline-specific knowledge, and for meeting expectations in teaching quality. Universities are required to put more attempts to develop quality teaching, in particular to enhancing pedagogy, supporting learning of students and faculty members' continuing education (Üstünlüoğlu, 2017). Likewise, it is essential to note that quality of teaching can be varied greatly in various lecturers' classes. As revealed by Voss et al. (2022)'s study lecturers with higher pedagogical knowledge and skills are more likely to exhibit higher teaching quality, and seem to be important for accomplishing quality and for adapting to different classroom contexts.

Responding to students' needs and meeting their expectations is also seen evidence in the review in which teachers are capable of adapting and responding to their students' needs and expectations (Voss et al., 2022). Voss et al. (2022) pointed out adapting teaching to students' needs and expectations is often considered to be at the heart of teaching and learning process. In this sense, adaptive lecturers' competence has been found to be predictive of higher average teaching quality, such as participation, interesting teaching and engagement of teachers (Brühwiler & Blatchford, 2011; Voss et al., 2022). In a similar vein, Wiśniewska and Grudowski (2016) emphasized key characteristics of lecturers with teaching quality in higher education context, among these are responsiveness and reliability in which a majority of students expected their academic lecturers to understand their needs as well as to prepare the most desired teaching environment for deep learning outcomes.

The results of this review further indicated that feedback, assessment and observation are also featured in the review. Being consistent with various

research(Cadez et al., 2017; Dicker et al., 2019; Greatbatch & Holland, 2016; Hammonds et al., 2017; Johnston et al., 2022b; Noben et al., 2022; Runge et al., 2023; Üstünlüoğlu, 2017), the positive role of peer observation and formative feedback at the program level are prominent; meanwhile, differing assessment of the efficacy of observational partnering based on academic experience levels are evidenced(Johnston et al., 2022). It is moreover indicated that these themes possess both short-term and long-term benefits as they can boost lecturers' confidence in teaching pedagogy, engagement with teaching scholarship literature, collegiality and personal development (Johnston et al., 2022; Woodman & Parappilly, 2015). A further theme that is evidenced is peer review of teaching. This theme emerged as another significant aspect relevant to quality of teaching assessment and enhancement. Base on some studies, peer review of teaching embraces various forms and includes a complex array of factors, such as organizational, program and individual factors (Greatbatch & Holland, 2016; Harrison et al., 2022; Johnston et al., 2022; Woodman & Parappilly, 2015). Importantly, peer review of teaching is considered more likely effective for promoting teaching development, while developing a shared language to describe peer review of teaching can be fruitful(Johnston et al., 2022). Despite of this, using quality teaching model in for peer review of teaching and collaboration in a community of practice enable to derivatize practices and produce safe spaces for receiving feedback(Patfield et al., 2022).

Overall, although further themes of student evaluation of teaching, teachers with enthusiastic and approach manner, teaching exchange workshop and using quality teaching model, and institutional support and facilitating teachers' collaboration may be less commonly reported in the review articles, it is essential note that these findings from this review raise pivotal and considerable points of quality of teaching in higher education because there is no one-size-fits-all strategies or approaches to quality teaching in the sector. Employing contextual suitability of teaching quality strategies can be fair and fruitful in a particular context(Cadez et al., 2017; Cardoso et al., 2015; Chung-Yang et al., 2014; Greatbatch & Holland, 2016; Hammonds et al., 2017; Henard & Leprince-Ringuet, 2008; Patfield et al., 2022). Similarly, there is a large volume of data which is being generated on quality of teaching in higher education whereas its utilisation is not well document(Johnston et al., 2022). It is crucial for educators and academic lecturers to be capable of their pedagogical knowledge in evaluating and adapting such a plenty of teaching quality data into their teaching practices most effectively(Cardoso et al., 2015; Henard & Leprince-Ringuet, 2008). The findings of this review

therefore have significant implications for higher education institutions in their decision-making in regard to developing, assessing and enhancing the quality of teaching.

#### **Limitation of the review**

This review is inevitable for its limitation because some or other aspects and approaches to enhance the quality of teaching in higher education may not be all covered and identified in the review. In investigating the quality of teaching practices widely, rather limiting to a specific aspect of quality, this enabled the authors to explore a range of areas and approaches in which quality of teaching is operated by higher education institutions and lecturers. This review, perhaps, might not be fully generalizable to all contexts based on the fact of its number of locations where the included articles were published, and a specific definition of teaching quality was not particularly focused on. However, the search of related articles was 18 years, from 2005 to 2023, yet it did not cover extensive investigation of the literature which was not relevant to the aspect of quality of teaching.

#### **Conclusion**

The findings from this systematic literature review can inform the practices of quality enhancing strategies of teaching in time as universities worldwide engage in a wide range of such practices to assure and enhance the quality of teaching. The findings from this review could highlight how universities have implemented strategies and methods of quality of teaching with insufficient consideration of how these various approaches and strategies might be used, and the potential consequences of these approaches. It is important to point to the need for further work to highlight the evidence concerned with strategies such as teachers' pedagogical knowledge and skills; meeting students' needs and expectations; feedback, assessment and observations; peer review of teaching; student evaluation of teaching; teachers with enthusiastic and approach manner; teaching exchange workshop and using quality teaching model; and institutional support and facilitating teachers' collaboration. As Cardoso et al. (2015) raise the questions of how to remain and to how to sustain the strategies and approaches to enhance the quality of teaching, and how universities could maximize an application of evaluation data in a meaningful way to support lecturers' quality. The systematic review presented through this study could provide a basis for more rational and evidence-based approaches that could lead to quality enhancement across the higher education sector.

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